

March 2005: In sharp contrast to warm, dry conditions in March 2004, the first month of spring 2005 featured abnormally cool temperatures and above normal precipitation across the Washington/Baltimore area. Monthly temperature departures between -2.5°F and -4°F were common across the local area (-3.5°F at DCA, -3.1°F at BWI, and -2.6°F at IAD), marking the coolest March since 1993 at DCA. March was the first month since October 2004 with subnormal temperatures at both DCA and BWI (since August 2004 at IAD). There were 26 days with at or below normal temperatures in Washington.

Highs held in the 30's on 5 days at BWI (1st-3rd, 9th-10th), 4 days at IAD (1st-3rd, 9th) and 3 days at DCA (2nd, 3rd, 9th). BWI's high of 33°F on the 3rd was -17°F below normal. The chilly conditions persisted most of the month with DCA observing 14 days with highs at or below 50°F while BWI and IAD each recorded 13. The month's highest readings, only in the 60's, occurred on two consecutive days twice in March (7th-8th and 29th-30th). Many areas away from the cool Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay topped 60°F on the 19th. At BWI and most of the local area, lows were at or below freezing on 16 of the first 18 days; 17 of the first 19 days at IAD. Minimum readings were more typical the latter half of March with lows remaining above freezing on the last 12 days at DCA.

Monthly precipitation totals averaged 4"-7" in most of the local area. Monthly precipitation surpluses of 1.20", 0.86" and 0.38" were reported at BWI, DCA and IAD, respectively. Three storm systems provided the majority of the month's precipitation. On the 8th, a strong cold front, moving northwest to southeast, brought heavy rain early in the morning that changed to heavy wet snow in some areas. Strong winds, with gusts up to 45 mph, ushered in a blast of Arctic air and resulted in temperatures plummeting 35°F to 40°F at most locations. Temperatures fell from well in the 50's early in the day to near or below freezing and ultimately into the low 20's by midnight. Some areas reported wind chill readings in the single digits. Although most of the snow melted on contact, well north and west of Baltimore and Washington some areas recorded accumulations of up to 3" in elevations above 700 ft. Water equivalent from the storm was about a half inch at most locations; DCA recorded 0.66".

Two rainstorms soaked the area on the 23rd and 28th causing many small streams and creeks to rise and resulted in street flooding in poor drainage areas. More than 2" were recorded in many areas from the storm system on the 23rd. BWI set a daily and monthly record of 2.56". BWI also topped the major airports with the greatest total on the 28th with another daily record rainfall of 1.83". Thunderstorms added to the rainfall totals during the latter event. March also featured the first reported hail of the season. On the 20th, brief but intense thunderstorms with hail the size of peas and nickels pelted Falls Church, Arlington and Loudoun counties in Virginia and parts of Prince Georges County, MD. No significant property damage was reported, according to press reports.

MARCH 2005 WEATHER STATISTICS FOR THE WASHINGTON/BALTIMORE AREA

Location	Station Temperatures (°F)					Extreme/Day		Precipitation (In.)				
	AvMx	AvMn	AvgT	NmlT	DepNml	Max	MinT	Total	Norm	Dep	Nml	2005 Snow
National (DCA)	51.2	34.9	43.0	46.5	-3.5	70/7	20/9	4.46	3.60	+0.86	9.40	0.8
Baltimore (BWI)	49.4	31.7	40.6	43.7	-3.1	69/7	17/10	5.13	3.93	+1.20	10.54	0.4
Dulles (IAD)	50.4	31.3	40.8	43.4	-2.6	69/7	17/9	3.93	3.55	+0.38	8.48	1.2

Looking Ahead to April: *Last Freeze at DCA and IAD.* April is usually the last month before fall when a 32°F or lower reading occurs in Washington. The city has never recorded a freezing reading in May, although suburban areas have. Below is a list of the last 32°F or lower reading at urban DCA and suburban IAD for the last 10 years.

At DCA				At IAD			
Year	Date of last 32°F or lower reading	Year	Date of last 32°F or lower reading	Year	Date of last 32°F or lower reading	Year	Date of last 32°F or lower reading
2004	April 5 (31°F)	1999	March 23 (32°F)	2004	April 16(30°F)	1999	April 25 (31°F)
2003	April 1 (32°F)	1998	March 25 (31°F)	2003	April 1 (27°F)	1998	April 13 (32°F)
2002	April 7 (32°F)	1997	April 10 (28°F)	2002	April 1 (27°F)	1997	May 8 (31°F)
2001	March 28 (28°F)	1996	March 23 (32°F)	2001	April 26 (32oF)	1996	May 14 (32°F)
2000	March 19 (32°F)	1995	April 5 (30°F)	2000	April 14 (32°F)	1995	April 15 (29°F)